

Looking Ahead

As the session progresses, FNA remains committed to advancing policies that prioritize nurse well-being, patient safety, ethical care, and access to quality

health services. While individual bills may change, the association's focus remains constant: supporting nurses and ensuring that nursing perspectives are central to health policy decisions in Florida.

Members are encouraged to stay connected, informed, and engaged—because nursing advocacy makes a difference. ■

2026 FNA Advocacy Days: Advancing Nursing's Voice in Health Policy

On February 4–5, 2026, nurses from across Florida convened in Tallahassee for the Florida Nurses Association's annual Advocacy Days. Held during the early weeks of the Legislative Session, the event provided nurses and nursing students with the opportunity to learn about key policy issues, build advocacy skills, and engage directly with lawmakers on issues impacting patient care and the nursing profession.

Advocacy Days served as both a learning experience and a platform for action. Through education, discussion, and direct engagement with policymakers, nurses strengthened their understanding of how legislation translates into real-world impact. The event reinforced the essential role nurses play in sharing their clinical expertise and firsthand experience to help drive change.

A central focus of this year's Advocacy Days was advancing the Florida Nurses Association's 2026 legislative priorities. Nurses spoke with legislators about the need for **protections from surgical smoke**, emphasizing the well-documented occupational hazards faced by nurses and surgical teams and the importance of consistent safety standards in operating rooms and procedural settings.

Participants also advocated for legislation related to **patient-directed medical orders (PDMO)**, highlighting the importance of clear, accessible processes that honor patient preferences and support ethical, patient-centered decision-making—particularly at the end of life. Nurses shared perspectives from practice, illustrating how clear statutory guidance and modernized tools, including electronic access and telehealth, can improve care coordination and reduce unnecessary suffering.

Another key area of advocacy focused on **nursing education program oversight**. Nurses emphasized the need for strong regulatory standards, accountability, and oversight to ensure the quality and integrity of nursing education programs. These discussions reinforced the connection between educational quality, public protection, and workforce readiness, particularly as Florida works to address ongoing nursing shortages.

Throughout Advocacy Days, nurses met with legislators and engaged in conversations that allowed for meaningful dialogue beyond talking points. These interactions highlighted nurses as



trusted professionals whose insights are grounded in evidence, ethics, and daily patient care. The presence of nurses at the Capitol sent a clear message about the profession's commitment to shaping policies that improve health outcomes for all Floridians.

During Advocacy Days, nurses also had the opportunity to connect with Senator Barbara Sharief, the only nurse currently serving in the Florida Legislature. Senator Sharief hosted a meetup for nurses, which provided a welcoming space for discussion and engagement, and FNA extends its appreciation for her continued support of nurses and health care issues.

The event concluded with reflection and forward planning, allowing participants to share insights from their legislative visits and identify next steps for continued engagement. Advocacy Days reminded attendees that effective advocacy does not end at the Capitol—it continues through ongoing communication, education, and involvement throughout the legislative session.

The 2026 FNA Advocacy Days demonstrated the collective impact nurses can have when they come together with a shared purpose. By engaging thoughtfully and professionally in the policy process, nurses reaffirmed their role as essential voices in shaping health care policy and advancing the health and safety of patients, communities, and the nursing workforce. ■